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WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICAN FOTONOVELAS: FROM CINDERELLA TO MATA HARI*

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Synopsis—The *Fotonovela* is a series of still photographs with balloon captions, telling, usually in 30 pages, a complete romance. Its evolution as a separate genre of women's literature is related to the changing definition of women's world for working-class Latin Americans. The shift in the locus of production and the way it is structured nationally and internationally relate to potential profits and magazine content. Audiences have been growing to include men, which on the one hand unites men's and women's worlds, but on the other sharpens some negative female images, especially those related to sex and violence. Emerging from the Cinderella theme of the 1960s, two distinct types of fotonovelas are identified in the late 1970s: the *novela suave*, with middle-class pretentions stressing salvation through consumption, and the *novela roja*, with working-class characters, explicit sex and violence, and a social disintegration focus. The implications of these for women's passivity in various spheres is discussed.

Almost since the invention of the printing press, women's fiction has proved a lucrative venture. Middle-class women—women from the class that was literate and had the leisure and money to read—were avid audiences for the 'romantic scribblers'. From *Pamela* on, women formed a unique market for literature that was devalued as 'sentimental' and worthy of contempt, when considered at all. Yet women's fiction, both in print and in the electronic media, gives important clues as to the content, myths, and reality which construct the world of women, as contrasted to the world of men (Bernard, 1978). Women's fiction provides both a reflection of women's world, as defined by social class and cultural context, and a means of shaping it.

The women's world present in English language women's fiction has been relatively well-documented (Brown, 1940; Papashvily, 1956; Fiedler, 1960; Russ, 1973; Smith, 1974; Mitchell, 1978; Kelley, 1979 are all examples of literary critiques of fiction aimed at middle-class North American and British women). In the Hispanic world, the parallel to the sentimentalists and the gothic novels came on the scene at a later date, in the *novelas rosas* of such Spanish authors as Corín Tellado, which came out weekly and were distributed in both Spain and Spanish-speaking Latin America in cheap paperback editions. These have been analyzed as breeding false consciousness, through ahistorical plots ignoring economic and political reality (Erhart, 1973; Colomina, 1976; Paz ,1977).

The novel format, focusing on the printed word alone, limited the audiences of both the *novelas rosas* and their English language counterparts. Another media form emerged, which utilized visual as well as verbal images, creating a unique type of feminine literature, the *fotonovela*. The fotonovela is a series of still photographs with balloon captions telling, usually in 30 pages, a complete romance. It appears as a magazine or comic with a specific series title (such as Corín Tellado, Fotoromances, Pecado Mortal) and comes out usually

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weekly or bi-weekly. In Spain, its immediate precursor was the *tebeo feminino*, romantic comic books that took hold in fascist Spain. According to Ramirez (1975), their success was due to their ability to deal with the major problems facing women as individuals in a society that was developing with profound internal contradictions which demanded certain compensations. The tebeos provided an escape. Romance as the ultimate reward for passive female behavior seemed the one sure thing in a world with uncontrollable, constant changes.

The fotonovela began after the Second World War in Italy, and later in France, as a by-product of the film industry (Haber, 1974). At first, the fotonovelas simply used stills from films, but soon evolved into its own media form, using the plots from novels written by Corín Tellado and the *tebeos femininos* which had preceded the war. A new way of creating the female world for working-class women appeared, which can be equated to the 'True Confessions' magazines in the United States (Flora, 1971). Even with low levels of literacy, the mass media were readily available to take their place along with religion and the family in defining what was ideally feminine—as well as ideally masculine.

At first most of the fotonovelas sold in Latin America were produced in Europe. Later subsidiaries of European companies were established in Latin America which printed the European product. Still later, Latin American-based companies began producing as well as printing the fotonovela.

In this article, the images of women presented in fotonovelas and their importance in reflecting the status of women in Latin America, particularly Colombia, will be analyzed. The structure of fotonovela production will be linked to the content and the different images of women presented.

CINDERELLA

Fotonovelas which circulated in Colombia in the 1960s and early 1970s were typified by *Corín Tellado*,[1] formerly shot in Spain and printed in Miami. They dealt with the sentimental problems of the high bourgeoisie (Mattelart, 1970). In them, Cinderella finds her prince. The heroine, poor, but somehow in middle-class quarters, with an upper middle-class wardrobe and beautician, maintained her purity and her pride in the face of pressures from males, both good (rich) and evil (not rich). Problems were solved through the passive acceptance of the heroine. Her virtue alone was sufficient to unmask the millionaire who had pretended to be poor to test whether she loved him or his money. Of course she loved him for himself.

Women in these stories were overwhelmingly passive, as demonstrated by their degree of dependence, lack of efficacy and initiative (Flora, 1973). Good women, those identified as supremely passive, had a latent sexuality, awakened by the hero and saved for marriage. Marriage appeared as a constant orgy of physical fulfilment with the steady arrival of

[1] Corín Tellado is the name of a Spanish author of romantic novelas. Originally she published cheap paperback novels of 127 pages, which appeared weekly. These were later converted to the fotonovela format, with the magazine entitled *Corín Tellado*. A television series (soap opera) of that name was distributed for a time. Other women's publications, such as *Vanidades* (published in Miami, U.S.A.) and *Paula* (published in Santiago, Chile) also publish the novelas. Corín Tellado is undoubtedly the best known female writer of the Spanish language, and her name, used as the title for one of the earliest and best known fotonovelas, became representative of both a person and a style of popular literature.

beautified babies, who *never* appeared in the fotonovela itself. There was occasionally sex outside of marriage for the good women, which was usually the result of being tricked by drinking too much alcohol. This was always instigated by the villain. She *never* enjoyed this illicit liaison. The double standard was strong, because men's sexuality could usually not be repressed. Indeed, the strength and degree of devotion of the hero was measured by his ability to somehow keep himself from physically violating the heroine when she appeared ready to 'give herself to him'. He, not she, was able to think ahead and maintain her virginity, which was her most valued possession. The women were either middle-class, or, because of their purity and passivity, worthy of becoming middle-class through marriage. Sex was implicit, scenes were chaste (indeed, the French and Italian fotonovela exporters shot special less suggestive love scenes in the 1960s for the Latin American market), and violence never appeared.

But changes in the Latin American situation, both in terms of production and consumption led to the demise of Cinderella. The novela format gained popularity in both its radio and television form. To compete, the printed form used its major advantage—the option of being more explicitly sexual. In Colombia, a growing economy and increasing rate of inflation required the economic input of women. The birth rate dropped dramatically. *Corín Tellado* and the sexually passive female vanished from the sales racks. The locus of fotonovela production for the northern part of Latin America moved from Europe to Mexico.

THE GLASS SLIPPER BREAKS

Currently in Colombia there are two distinct types of fotonovelas. The two genres can be distinguished by the amount of sex and violence portrayed. The first genre is the *novela suave*,[2] which is based on the fotonovelas that first came from Europe. Sex is a part of the novela, but it is not as explicitly portrayed. Violence is not a major element. The second genre is the *novela roja*, a more recent arrival in Colombia, which originated from Mexico. Explicit sex and sexuality, as well as constant physical violence, particularly of men against women, are the hallmarks of the *novela roja*.

While the covers of the novelas suaves strive for a romantic and tender note, using head shots or in a few cases shots from the waist-up of male and female characters in close and touching proximity, the novelas rojas always have full body shots, with the women either in the scantiest of bikinis or underwear or with strategically torn clothing. In 50 per cent of the cases, explicit violence or the threat of violence is shown on the cover. *Los Adolescentes*, a Mexican-produced fotonovela, when it does not show explicit violence on the cover, presents on the back cover what is advertized as a 'sexi-poster,' which shows women in even greater stages of undress and more suggestive poses. On these covers, female sexuality is portrayed as an irresistable temptation to men, leading toward sin and away from reasoned interaction and solidarity between the sexes. The violence portrayed reinforces the individualistic mode of problem solution. Mata Hari's sexuality inevitably leads to tragedy.

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[2] *Novelas suaves* and *novelas rojas* are terms I am defining to represent the new current types of Latin American fotonovelas. The only similar term used in Spanish literary criticism is *novelas rosas*. In my development of the subject, I want to build on that term.

PRODUCTION

Both genres currently produced come primarily from Mexico, but there is a small but vital movement toward nationalization of the product with Colombian-produced fotonovelas. Some are coming out of Venezuela as well. The printing industry in Colombia is well protected through prohibition of importation of printed materials. All the fotonovelas distributed in Colombia must come through a Colombian editorial house, be printed by a Colombian press, and distributed by a Colombian distributor. However, there is no law concerning the *source* of the material, and in certain cases, it is much cheaper to buy the negatives ready to be taken to the press than to prepare the materials in Colombia. In one case although they could have shot the novela in Colombia at less cost than they could purchase the negatives, the parent company in Mexico insisted they purchase the Mexican product.

Because the costs of production are the same no matter how many times the negatives are used, re-use rather than national production is encouraged. In a show of independence, not nationalistic feeling, one Colombian editor changed the Mexican-produced covers for cover photos purchased from Europe, showing Nordic type protagonists in spring-like outdoor settings, unrelated to the content of the magazine.

The novela suave is a logical offshoot of the Corín Tellado format. There are no more millionaires for Cinderella to marry, but the characters are clearly middle-class. The males are destined for comfortable office jobs. The heroine is still often of slightly lower social class origins, often working as secretary for the male, who is older and more cynical, but eventually captivated by the heroine's endearing simplicity, purity, and groveling devotion.

The editorial companies producing the novelas suave see themselves responding to the Mexican fotonovelas, which they do not feel meet the needs of Colombian reality. The newly-installed chief of production at Editora Cinco recently wrote to Mexico asking them to change their themes to be more positive. She sees the Mexican products as very damaging, both regarding the themes presented and the abuse of language, which tends to be full of idiomatic Mexican phrases that do not fit Colombian word usage. She stated she felt a moral obligation to raise the level of the reading material in Colombia. She did not feel her objection to the Mexican product was a Puritanical one, but based on a realization of the differences between Mexico and Colombia. Particularly offensive was the large degree of machismo she saw present in the Mexican fotonovelas. The men in charge of production of the other Colombian fotonovelas are much less concerned about machismo in the Mexican product. Their complaints, when they exist, are that the Mexican fotonovelas are in general crude and destructive of Colombian cultural identity.

Production of fotonovelas is almost entirely male-dominated. All of the directors and producers are male. As in English language women's fiction, there is a relatively high female input into the story line with nearly half (45 per cent) of the listed authors having identifiable female names. Interestingly, in the current sample (1978/1979), no author is given in 27 per cent of the fotonovelas.[3] None of the novelas rojas are credited to women. Interestingly,

[3] In the course of my cross-national studies, I have found several of the stories *not* credited by author in their Colombian incarnation did have authors in a previous Mexican existence. The titles and photographs were changed, but the captions and dialogue are identical. Obviously, there is little copyright protection for authors. The authors who were pirated without credit were, interestingly enough, women.

the most sexually explicit of the novelas suaves, *Extasis*, from Venezuela, are almost all written by women.

Unlike the novelas suaves, which use a variety of authors for different issues within the same title, the novelas rojas tend to have a single author for each title. Myths arise surrounding these authors, who every week come up with a story titillating enough to attract school boys on their way home from school, taxi drivers between customers, prostitutes during the day, and maids when the family is out. José de Cruz, who originated *Pecado Mortal*, the original novela roja, was said to have written it between two and five in the morning, standing at his typewriter in the dark. Apparently the hour and the obscurity inspired his lurid imagination.

AUDIENCE

The novelas suaves are aimed at a middle-and lower middle-class audience. The editorial houses have carried out rudimentary market surveys which show them as reaching a better-educated audience than originally anticipated. They see their magazines being bought by women, but read by women and men. Although profits come almost exclusively from the volume of sales, with numbers of copies printed in Colombia ranging from 19,000 to 70,000, (contrasted to around 300,000 for those printed in Mexico), several novelas suaves are beginning to attract a few advertisers as well. Advertising appears for entertainment (other novelas, magazines, television and radio channels, usually owned by the company or its subsidiary), but also beauty products (bras, hand cream, nail polish remover) and sanitary napkins. Consumption, the ads imply, leads to an increase in status. Sewing machines are advertised in a few numbers, emphasizing the possibility of working at home in one's 'spare time,' either by selling directly through a small *tienda*, or shop located in the home, or through an intermediary to a larger clothing manufacturing company. Such machines are often sold on credit, for substantial down payments and weekly or monthly payments. In many cases, machines are repossessed and sold any number of times, for the home sewing business is not as lucrative as indicated in such novelas as *Simplemente María*, and small enterprises prove to be very risky to the woman investing, although profitable to those selling the machines. The ads for self-improvement fit nicely with the themes of the novelas suaves that indicate the importance of self-improvement, through study or deliberate individual actions. They suggest ways of earning necessary income while at the same time retaining the woman's primary identification as housewife.

The editors of the novelas rojas see their audience as decidedly working-class or even lumpenproletariat. Their circulation is higher in Columbia than the novelas suaves—ranging from 50,000 to 75,000 copies per week, per title.

The content of the novelas rojas sells because it relates to what people see in real life. The mother who has been unfaithful, the betrayed country girl who turns to prostitution, the father who forces his sexual attentions on his daughter (always unknowingly in the novelas rosas) are something the readers themselves have experienced and to which they can relate. Men increasingly buy the novelas rojas primarily for its 'turn on' effect. But women keep buying it as well.

That convoluted sexual violence is indeed a part of the reality of even readers of the novelas suaves is indicated in the letters received in response to the advice-to-the-lovelorn column. The cases related are so horrifying and so complex that very few can be printed, much less be responded to in a rational and helpful manner. The novelas rojas do not solicit letters, but still seem to have a sense of reality of the life of the working classes.

The chief of production and his colleagues at Editorial Icavi in Bogota see the popularity of the novelas rojas as due to an increasing cynicism in Colombia. A less romantic generation, which has been raised with radio and television, sees the kind of romance that stresses chastity and tenderness as ridiculous. Movies containing nudity and explicit sexuality have changed expectations. Credibility of the press has fallen in Colombia, and newspaper sales have fallen. The drama of the fotonovela, touching as it does on the everyday conflicts of the lower middle and working classes, outsells the drama of national and international events.

USE OF SYMBOLS AND IMAGES OF WOMEN

A certain amount of moral hypocrisy is needed in the presentation of the novela roja, although it is also present to a growing extent in the novela suave. The bad people always lose, although they seem to have a great deal of fun on their way to perdition. Sacred symbols, such as God, family, motherhood, and, in the Mexican-produced fotonovelas, the virgin of Guadalupe, are brought in at crucial moments to help identify the good people. The symbols are both visual and verbal, with the pornographic and the sacred often presented in close juxtaposition.

Good–evil juxtaposition is most striking in cases such as 'A Debt to Pay' in the fotonovela *Pecado Mortal.* In a convoluted mixture of sex, robbery, sex, murder, and sex, Lydia is a prostitute-adventuress, the mistress of 'Flat Tire' who was foiled by the humble railroad watchman in a train robbery attempt. Mauro is married happily, if in poverty, for 10 years. He has a son dying of a brain tumor, who can only be cured by an expensive operation they cannot afford. Lydia becomes attached to Mauro after he finds her hiding in a railroad car, has sex with her, and befriends her. He tells her that if it weren't for his wife, he would certainly form something more permanent with a hot potato like her. Lydia arranges by trickery to get stolen money to Mauro, and have her lover arrested for the crime. The story ends with the statement that '. . . God, the Allpowerful, had moved her bitter heart'.

The juxtaposition of symbols serves both to justify the reading of the story, since it has after all a moral lesson, and to justify the lives of those who read it, who suffer the same realities of forced sex, physical violence, and dependence on faith to survive. The format of sinful actions, but retribution at the end, is not unique to the fotonovela. In countries like Brazil and Chile where military censorship keeps sex and violence out of the media, religious television and radio programs often play the same role. A new convert comes forward to tell his or her story, urged on by the evangelist. Sins are enumerated, and, at the urging of the evangelist, elaborated at great length and glowing detail, often for 15 or 20 minutes, beginning after the opening hymn and lasting until time for the closing commercial. In the last 30 seconds the converted sinner quickly remarks that Jesus saved him or her, and he or she hasn't engaged in any such awful behavior since salvation. The act of being titillated by the recounting of sins is justified by the final moving of the Hand of God.

In the fotonovela there is a long, often violent and exploitative story which serves not so much to develop the plot, which is usually set down in the first four of the thirty pages, as to keep the reader's interest and present the qualities of good and evil which allow for problem solution. The solution comes on the last two pages, generally through the convenient, although usually violent, death of one of the protagonists. (See Martinez Pardo, 1978, for analysis of these variables in television.) This is like the lotteries, which for the

poor in Latin America represent the swift, uncontrolled solution to complex problems that cannot be simply solved. The solutions appear not as a natural consequence of the preceding events, nor as the voluntary action of the principles involved, but as an act of fate. Violence and death are much more likely to be the solutions in the novelas rojas, which are consciously aimed at the lower income market and more likely to include scenes of poverty and working-class living quarters as part of the story development. For these individuals, all efforts at self-improvement are likely to be impeded by the social structure, and thus fate is much more likely to be emphasized as paramount in determining people's lives.

The fotonovelas rojas give an *appearance* of contact with reality, through the mention of educational problems, problems with work, problems of romantic fulfilment, and, in the case of the 'true life' stories, with the sex and violence surrounding everyday life. But, this appearance deals only with the individual level, and thus serves to mystify the situation to give the impression of a solution. The simple solution presented, in the presence of so many details that may appear real, can tend to obscure an economic and political analysis of individual problems and to focus on escape and passive waiting, rather than organization and active attempts at change. The novelas suaves have 'real' problems as well, but, unlike the novelas rojas, they are emotional rather than economic in origin. Thus solutions are more easily worked out. There are not the economic complications as presented in the novelas rojas.

WOMEN AND PASSIVITY

Women in fotonovelas remain moderately active economically. In 1 1970 survey of fotonovelas (Flora, 1973) as in 1978/1979, 50 per cent were either employed or studying. In a 1979 survey, there were significant differences between the novelas rojas, where few worked, and the novelas suaves, where more women were employed. Yet it remains clear that the most important role for women, linked closely to their sentimental role in keeping the man from evil, is in their role in reproduction of the labor force. The women are never employed in jobs of consequence or high earnings, although those that are prostitutes occasionally are shown to receive temporary high remuneration for services rendered. In the novelas rojas, half of those women who were shown as employed were prostitutes, while the rest of those employed used or were used for sex as a direct result of their employment. In the novelas suaves, the women were secretaries or students.

When the woman is not economically active, she is reimbursed ideologically. She helps her husband, is loyal to him, despite mental, physical and economic mistreatment, ultimately receiving the prize beyond value—a man of her own. The male is mobile and untied to family needs, and thus suited to an advanced economy, while the woman is tenaciously loyal, providing emotional stability in a situation where other stability is systematically denied.

The novelas suaves are much more likely than the novelas rojas to show plots being happily resolved through individual action rather than through fate (no collective action of any kind occurs). The most common 'action' is when the woman (70 per cent of the cases) or the man (20 per cent of the cases) remains faithful and awaits the love who is dealing with a barrier. It is usually another emotional involvement, including (1) a sexual rival, obviously more promiscuous than the hero or heroine; (2) a prior emotional claim, either a mother (in the case of men) or a child (in the case of women) who does not allow

them to get together, or (3) the pride of the man who fancies himself to be a playboy and thus must be tricked into realization of his love for the heroine. Only in this last category does the heroine act, instead of react, and it is her natural goodness, in combination with the involuted plot, that results in the hero giving up his life of one night stands and adoring women. In the other two categories action more usually resolves the plot than a random act of fate. However such action tends to be the dramatic revelation of wickedness in the sexual rival or mother. There are certain fateful interventions in the novelas suaves that make the barrier between lovers disappear—a mafioso shoots the cruel husband as he leaves jail on drug charges; a priest tells the heroine in confession that it is not a sin to marry her dead twin sister's widower; the woman's first love, crippled in a construction accident, dies in order to free the woman from caring for him—but the majority of novela suave plots have an internal logic and systematic resolution. But active women still imply destruction.

WOMEN AND SEXUALITY

Sex has come out of the marital chamber and hit the beaches, the woods and other romantic and not so romantic locations in both types of fotonovela. Even nice girls have sex and they do not necessarily wind up pregnant. Occasional affairs within marriage are tolerated, if they serve to (1) bring the married couple together, or (2) establish a loving relationship prior to the demise of the cruel husband (divorce is discussed, but never occurs: death always precedes legal action).

A sexually active female, provided she acts out of love, is no longer automatically wicked and to be punished in the novelas suaves. A common theme is the fallen woman raised—a woman who made a mistake for love (but the man turns out to be vile and abandons her, with or without child), confesses all to the gentle and loving man who marries her anyway. Honesty, rather than purity, has become the new sexual criterion.

In the novelas suaves, women authors are more likely than men to deal explicitly with sex. Sex appears explicitly in 50 per cent of the stories credited to men, and in 66 per cent of the stories credited to women. Women authors are more likely to deal with extra-marital, as opposed to pre-marital sex.

Female sexuality in the novelas suaves is part of the plot. Almost all the novelas rojas have on their opening page a couple in a passionate embrace, his hand under her miniskirt. The angle used for the photography is a low one, emphasizing the legs of the female protagonist. The last shot usually shows the dead body of the female protagonist, again shot from the legs up, where she has fallen after being brutally murdered by the hero in mistaken jealous anger.

Female sexuality in the novelas rojas is omnipresent, and is no longer a means to label a woman as good or evil. Evil women use sex, and good women are either (1) true to one man, in or out of marriage, or (2) used by men for sex. Female sexuality, however, in a majority of the novelas rojas, is seen as the major source of evil, inspiring violence and breaking down primary ties to the point of fratricide and patricide. The linkage of sex with violence—woman, by *being*, inspires the worst in men—makes inevitable the incest and rape that follows. Even in the novelas suaves, the incest theme is evident, with fathers invariably, although unknowingly, desiring their illegitimate daughters. As Memmi (1968) pointed out, it is the thing that most intimately identifies a woman—her sexuality—that makes her most vulnerable to oppression. This vulnerability is given in the novelas rojas.

Women are powerless, and suffer violation and death with the same passivity they were awarded the prince in the Cinderella tales.

Insanity is a common plot device in the novelas rojas that allows for some sort of coping with the violence, usually sexual, that women suffer. Like death, it becomes the only manner of dealing with an impossible situation. Both the dead woman and the mad woman achieve a beatification that poverty usually denies. They are both the ultimate conclusion to marianismo, machismo's other face (Stevens, 1973).

MATA HARI

In previous work on fotonovelas, Jan Flora and I identified three types of fotonovelas: (1) total escape; (2) disintegration–integration; and (3) consumption as salvation (Flora and Flora, 1978). The total escape type with its Cinderella heroine has practically disappeared from the Colombian scene, although a few still exist in the novelas suaves. The consumption as salvation type also appears in a more muted form in the novelas suaves. In Colombian fotonovelas the consumption item stressed as key to all others is education, with much stress laid on the necessity of the hero continuing his studies, despite his impulse to marry and get a job right away to support his wife and future children. The message is 'wait, study, and have an even better life'. With the waiting, sex before marriage is acceptable, although it must be confined to the intended or attributed to a brief losing of one's self-control, usually as a result of grief or alcohol. In the novelas suaves that portray married couples, the consumption as salvation form is more explicit. Usually the marriage is suffering because the husband is stingy both with his money and his attentions. Through the intervention of an attentive rival, usually a creation of the husband to see if his wife is really faithful and loves him, he learns by her warm and passionate response to the generous man of fiction that he has erred in his ways by not spending more, with the monetary and emotional expenditure being equated.

Most common is the disintegration–integration type, although, particularly among the novelas rojas, disintegration prevails. There Mata Hari and female destructiveness prevail. While fotonovelas have always denied the existence of community, union, or political groupings, now even the family is shown as a source of danger from which the individual must be separated. The incest theme separates fathers from daughters, daughters die bearing the father's child, and sons and fathers kill each other in battles over the son's wife. Love for the same woman (usually wicked and manipulative) causes brother to kill brother. And even the mother–child bond is broken as the mother-in-law increasingly becomes the wicked manipulator who keeps lovers and husbands and wives apart. It is more the novelas suaves which deal with the wicked mother theme, while the novelas rojas focus on the wicked results of ill-directed male passions. Sexuality isolates the woman from her family, who, upon discovering her immoral behavior, throw her out with curses and blows.

CONCLUSION

Fotonovelas have become more 'realistic' as the genre of women's fiction has shifted from Cinderella finding the prince to Mata Hari losing everything.

However the message of female passivity has remained the same. Once produced for a single audience, the fotonovela presented a single dream of escape. Now with a readership

that cuts across social classes, two distinct subgenres are emerging: one aimed at a middle-class audience (novelas suaves), and one aimed at a working-class audience (novelas rojas).

Both subgenres now recognize female sexuality and explicit sexual content has led to an increasing number of male readers. Sex and violence become equated in fiction as they are in life.

Changing patterns in production and changing cultural settings may lead to more options for middle-class women, sexually if not economically, and these are represented by the novelas suaves. But for working-class women, the solutions to the real binds of both economy and machismo are limited and dismal: madness or death.

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